

Hurricane Katrina Individual Assistance Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) If an evacuee is registered with FEMA for IA benefits, are they eligible to receive PA benefits?

If the evacuee is registered with FEMA but has not received funds yet, they are still eligible to receive PA assistance. Once the evacuee has received funds from FEMA for IA, they are not eligible for PA benefits.

- 2) When an applicant receives emergency rental assistance, who determines that the rental assistance they're asking for is fair? Is there a monthly cap for rental assistance? Is there a list or guidance of rates by community?

The federal government publishes an annual list called the "FMR" which displays the fair market rental rates throughout the country. The figures that are published are a result of surveys conducted in each county to determine the average rental rates in that county. FEMA, in turn, uses the FMR to determine what assistance will be paid to an applicant.

The type of rental housing an individual or family will receive assistance for is determined by the number of individuals. For instance, a single individual or a couple will generally receive assistance for 1 bedroom; a couple with one child, 2 bedrooms; a couple with 2 children, 3 bedrooms; etc.

- 3) Once an applicant is registered with FEMA, how long does it take for them to get money in their hand?

If an individual or family gives authorization for an electronic funds transfer (EFT), they can have their funds within 24 hours of being approved.

However, if they opt to receive a check instead, the time frame will be extended. Here's why: First, the applicant's address must be verified. Next, they must wait for the Treasury Dept. to cut a check. Then the check goes into the mail. Getting the check through the postal system may take several days.

- 4) Is there some type of voucher the clients will have with them to verify FEMA will be paying the rent?

No, not from FEMA. They may have a voucher from one of the volunteer agencies to provide short-term housing, but they (the evacuees) receive direct benefits from FEMA's IA program once they are registered and would be paying the landlord just like any tenant.

- 5) What would be an estimated time that FEMA would be paying?

If the evacuee has a bank account that they can access and can accept Electronic Funds Transfer, they should receive their approved benefits within 24

hours of being registered with FEMA for the IA program. If not, and they are receiving the benefits via check, then it could take from 10-14 days after they are registered.

- 6) Some evacuees have indicated a desire to make Michigan their permanent residence. Are they eligible for 18 months of Housing Assistance, or only until permanent residency is established?

IA eligibility is determined by FEMA. Direct your evacuees to contact FEMA at 1-800 621-3362 to discuss those issues.

- 7) Is legal mediation assistance reimbursable?

Certain legal expenses are eligible under the IA Program. Evacuees with legal questions should first contact the FEMA legal assistance hotline at 1-800-310-7029. Evacuees can also contact the American Bar Association at the following numbers:

Evacuees from Alabama - 1-800-354-6154

Evacuees from Louisiana - 1-800-310-7029

Evacuees from Mississippi - 1-866-255-4495

- 8) Can evacuees re-apply if denied for FEMA benefits?

If evacuees have been denied benefits, there is an appeal process. If the evacuee has been denied IA benefits because of lack of or inaccurate information, they can reapply by calling 1-800-621-3362 (FEMA Registration Hotline). If they have been denied for other reasons, the appeal information will be included in their denial letter.

- 9) Some evacuees have indicated a desire to make Michigan their permanent residence. Are they eligible for 18 months of Housing Assistance, or only until permanent residency is established?

IA eligibility is determined by FEMA. Direct your evacuees to contact FEMA at the 800 number to discuss those issues.

Hurricane Katrina Public Assistance Request for Public Assistance (RPA) Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) Does a county need to fill out a Request for Public Assistance (RPA) for each county department or just one to cover the entire county?

A single RPA is sufficient for all county departments.

- 2) Does a Request for Public Assistance cover local jurisdictions within the county?

No, county departments only. Cities, townships, etc. need to fill out their own RPA.

- 3) Does a State Department (local Department of Human Services) need to fill out a Request for Public Assistance?

No. State departments fill out one RPA. Local DHS will submit expenses to the main DHS office in Lansing. The main DHS office will apply for reimbursement with FEMA.

- 4) Does a district health department have to fill out a Request for Public Assistance for each county it serves or just a single Request for Public Assistance?

A district health department only needs to fill out one RPA.

- 5) Can an Intermediate School District (ISD) apply for all the individual school districts it covers?

Yes, per FEMA, an ISD can apply for the individual school districts it covers.

- 6) What if you are not a traditional department of county government but rather a separate legal entity created by Washtenaw County and the U of M Health System under the MI Urban Coop Act? We have a separate board, etc.

Our advice is to complete the RPA, submit it to our office and we will forward to FEMA for eligibility determination.

- 7) Do non-profits have to apply if there is a work agreement with the county?

Non-profits are not eligible applicants, therefore do not have to submit a RPA.

Hurricane Katrina Applicant Eligibility Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) Who is eligible for Public Assistance?

State and local governments and Native American tribes or tribal organizations.

- 2) Are Private Non-Profit (PNP) organizations eligible for Public Assistance?

No. Per FEMA guidance dated September 19, 2005, PNP's are not eligible applicants for 3225-EM-MI.

- 3) Are for profit companies eligible for FEMA Public Assistance funding?

Under Public Assistance, only State and Local Governments, certain Private Non-Profit Organizations and Native American Tribal Organizations are eligible applicants. They are the only organizations that can receive payments from FEMA as reimbursement for eligible expenses incurred under the Public Assistance emergence declaration. If an eligible applicant contracted with a property owner (individual or company) to use their facilities as a temporary shelter for the evacuees, then the costs could be eligible. The applicant would be paid as a form of reimbursement for the payments they made to the contracted property owner for the use of their facilities. **PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS ANSWER WAS PROVIDED PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER 19, 2005 FEMA GUIDANCE THAT DECLARED PRIVATE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS NOT ELIGIBLE AS APPLICANTS FOR PUBLIC ASSISTANCE.**

- 4) I understand we need to have a contract between a local subdivision and local hotels if we are going to temporarily house families in them (in order for those costs to be eligible). Does the contract need to be between the county and the hotels or will the contract be between DHS and the hotels?

If the local jurisdiction wants to set up the contract, they can do that. If the local jurisdiction wants to coordinate with local DHS to do it, they can do that as well.

- 5) Is a federal agency eligible for any reimbursement? We've done change of addresses, helped with FEMA applications, registered evacuees etc.

Federal agencies are not eligible applicants under Public Assistance. Only state and local governments and native American tribes or tribal organizations are eligible.

- 6) Does a Private Non-Profit need to have a written "contract" with the local government?

Written contracts are not required by FEMA. However, the local government may require a contract for an agency to provide eligible services to evacuees. FEMA has modified applicant eligibility guidelines so that state and local governments can enter into a work agreement with private not-profits to provide eligible services to evacuees on behalf of that government agency. **FEMA guidance states the following:**

“Most Private-Non-Profit (PNP) organizations, like churches and other faith based organizations are not eligible applicants under the Public Assistance program. However, if the PNP is providing shelter services on the behalf of an eligible city, county or state jurisdiction, the eligible entity may seek reimbursement. The eligible jurisdiction should have a written agreement with the PNP describing the services; i.e. building rental, personnel, food, transportation, etc. and certifying that the services are being provided on the behalf of the eligible entity. They should specify that the assistance is for Hurricane Katrina evacuees only. The agreements should be in place at the start of operations, but similar to mutual aid agreements, may be put in writing after the start of operations. These agreements must not stipulate that reimbursement is contingent upon receipt of FEMA funding. Documentation of costs incurred will be required.”

Hurricane Katrina Cost Eligibility Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) Does Public Assistance cover volunteers being deployed by the American Red Cross to Louisiana, Mississippi, Hurricane Katrina areas for tetanus shots & any other vaccines or boosters required?

No, Public Assistance does not cover any costs incurred related to the deployment of individuals for EMAC or the American Red Cross.

- 2) The Local EOC is assisting in the coordination of transitional housing and related activities for Michigan Katrina evacuees. Can we cover OT for coordination?

Yes, OT only.

- 3) Katrina evacuees have been placed in transitional housing. The city has provided cell phones for them to use. Can the cell phone minutes, rental fees, etc be reimbursed?

Per FEMA (disaster specific guidance #2) cell phone minutes and rental fees are not eligible expenses

- 4) Also, we called in a technician on OT to get the cell phones distributed. Is the OT an allowable expense?

Per FEMA (disaster specific guidance #2) OT related to an ineligible activity is not eligible.

- 5) There seems to be some confusion as to the eligibility of costs incurred for transportation of evacuees currently in Michigan who wish to be sent to another state. Based on a conference call with FEMA Region 5 on Tuesday, September 13, 2005, the following protocol has been adopted. This information has already been shared with the DHS emergency management representative, Steve Gleason, since he is in the SEOC.

First-The Department of Human Services (DHS) has agreed to take the lead in providing this service in addition to the many others they are already assisting the evacuees with. All inquiries must be coordinated with DHS.

Second-This is not a blanket authorization to provide this service to any evacuee that asks for it. MSP/EMD is asking that the DHS staff member who is working with the evacuee contact the JFO and discuss the specifics with Joel Pepper (SCO) or Matt Opsommer (PAO). Their contact numbers are 517-324-2353 and 517-336-2681.

Third-If after providing the details to the JFO, it is determined this would be eligible, the DHS staff member must verify that the evacuee: 1) has been registered with FEMA and has received their applicant ID number for Individual Assistance benefits, 2) has been provided with all available information regarding any other federal assistance they may be eligible for, 3) that the DHS staff

member has made contact with the organization and/or individual(s) identified by the evacuee as the contact for the destination they are being sent to, and the DHS staff member has determined that the person(s) they spoke with is/are aware that the evacuee is being sent to them, that they are aware of the evacuee's condition and any special needs they may have, and that they are able to provide adequate and appropriate housing for the evacuee.

Fourth-A narrative memo regarding the conversation(s) with the individual(s) at the destination location must be prepared and signed by the DHS staff member making the contact, and must be attached to the receipt for the travel voucher (plane ticket or other form of transportation) for eligibility purposes. The memo should identify the relationship between the evacuee and the individual(s) accepting responsibility for the evacuee being sent to them.

- 6) Are transportation costs from the Gulf Coast Region to the State of Michigan an eligible expense?

This is an eligible expense but, in order to be eligible, the transportation must be coordinated through the State Emergency Operations Center.

- 7) What if county sheriff deputies (or any local government employees) go down to the Gulf Coast Region on their own. Will their costs be covered?

No – this is an EMAC issue. In order to be reimbursed for EMAC, the local agency must be assigned a specific mission by the State Emergency Operations Center..

- 8) If staff who currently work part time (i.e. 20 hours per week) have worked extra hours beyond what they normally work - are the extra hours worked eligible?

Yes, extra hours worked by part time staff are eligible. Applicants need to keep track of what hours are worked as the regular work week and what hours are worked extra. The regular work hours are not eligible.

- 9) Are vaccinations given to workers being deployed to the Gulf Coast Region an eligible expense?

No, this is not an eligible PA expense

- 10) Are vaccinations for children not in a shelter, but who need to get into school, eligible?

County health departments have been directed to administer needed vaccinations to any evacuee and send the costs to the MI Dept of Community Health. MDCH will then apply for FEMA reimbursement.

- 11) We have set up a Reception Center for processing hurricane victims into our system. We need security there as we have already had some issues. Can we pay deputies from the Sheriff's Department overtime to help out in the center?

Yes, you can pay them overtime for SECURITY at the reception center.

12) Can I provide lunches in the Reception Center for the staff there who are unable to get out while assisting evacuees?

Yes, while they are at the Reception Center assisting evacuees (unless they are receiving a per diem).

Hurricane Katrina Evacuee Transportation Cost Eligibility Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) There seems to be some confusion as to the eligibility of costs incurred for transportation of evacuees currently in Michigan who wish to be sent to another state. Based on a conference call with FEMA Region 5 on Tuesday, September 13, 2005, the following protocol has been adopted. This information has already been shared with the DHS emergency management representative, Steve Gleason, since he is in the SEOC.

First-The Department of Human Services (DHS) has agreed to take the lead in providing this service in addition to the many others they are already assisting the evacuees with. All inquiries must be coordinated with DHS.

Second-This is not a blanket authorization to provide this service to any evacuee that asks for it. MSP/EMD is asking that the DHS staff member who is working with the evacuee contact the JFO and discuss the specifics with Joel Pepper (SCO) or Matt Opsommer (PAO). Their contact numbers are 517-324-2353 and 517-336-2681 respectively.

Third-If after providing the details to the JFO, it is determined this would be eligible, the DHS staff member must verify that the evacuee: 1) has been registered with FEMA and has received their applicant ID number for Individual Assistance benefits, 2) has been provided with all available information regarding any other federal assistance they may be eligible for, 3) that the DHS staff member has made contact with the organization and/or individual(s) identified by the evacuee as the contact for the destination they are being sent to, and the DHS staff member has determined that the person(s) they spoke with is/are aware that the evacuee is being sent to them, that they are aware of the evacuees condition and any special needs they may have, and that they are able to provide adequate and appropriate housing for the evacuee.

Fourth-A narrative memo regarding the conversation(s) with the individual(s) at the destination location must be prepared and signed by the DHS staff member making the contact, and must be attached to the receipt for the travel voucher (plane ticket or other form of transportation) for eligibility purposes. The memo should identify the relationship between the evacuee and the individual(s) accepting responsibility for the evacuee being sent to them.

- 2) Are transportation costs from the Gulf Coast Region to the State of Michigan an eligible expense?

This is an eligible expense but, **in order to be eligible**, the transportation must be coordinated through the State Emergency Operations Center.

- 3) In state transportation is an eligible cost. Is the cost of bus passes eligible?

Reasonable and necessary bus pass costs are eligible.

Hurricane Katrina Out of State Deployment Cost Eligibility Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) Does Public Assistance cover volunteers being deployed by the American Red Cross to Louisiana, Mississippi, Hurricane Katrina areas for tetanus shots & any other vaccines or boosters required?

No, Public Assistance does not cover any costs incurred related to the deployment of individuals for EMAC or the American Red Cross.

- 2) What if county sheriff deputies (or any local government employees) go down to the Gulf Coast Region on their own. Will their costs be covered?

No – this is an EMAC issue. In order to be reimbursed for EMAC, the local agency must be assigned a specific mission by the State Emergency Operations Center..

- 3) We have incurred expenses through an EMAC deployment. How do we get reimbursed?

PA does not reimburse for EMAC expenses. Please contact Dawn Lake at 517-324-2330 for further information about EMAC eligible expenses.

Hurricane Katrina Overtime Cost Eligibility Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) The Local EOC is assisting in the coordination of transitional housing and related activities for Michigan Katrina evacuees. Can we cover OT for coordination?

Yes, OT only.

- 2) We called in a technician on OT to get the cell phones distributed. Is the OT an allowable expense?

Per FEMA (disaster specific guidance #2) OT related to an ineligible activity is not eligible.

- 3) If staff who currently work part time (i.e. 20 hours per week) have worked extra hours beyond what they normally work - are the extra hours worked eligible?

Yes, extra hours worked by part time staff are eligible. Applicants need to keep track of what hours are worked as the regular work week and what hours are worked extra. The regular work hours are not eligible.

- 4) We have set up a Reception Center for processing hurricane victims into our system. We need security there as we have already had some issues. Can we pay deputies from the Sheriff's Department overtime to help out in the center?

Yes, you can pay them overtime for SECURITY at the reception center.

- 5) Is OT allowed for a Fire Marshal to inspect a school? We had about 24 hours of OT for inspections, consults, and meetings to get that building okayed for a temporary shelter.

Yes

- 6) Will comp time be eligible for reimbursement for staff that are not eligible for overtime?

No - The FEMA Public Assistance grant is a reimbursement grant program. Eligible applicants can only be reimbursed for eligible expenses they have incurred